

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Public Information Department, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340

March 18, 1988

PRESS RELEASE

MODERN ART

STORYTELLER AND MARTIAL ARTS EXPERT TO GIVE FREE DEMONSTRATION AT ART MUSEUM

Mark Salzman, one of very few Westerners to master wushu, the Chinese martial arts, will demonstrate his skills and talk about his experiences in China on Wednesday, April 6, at 7:00 pm at The Cleveland Museum of Art.

In his highly acclaimed book, Iron & Silk, Salzman defines wushu: "Wushu is the Chinese word for martial arts, and refers to any of hundreds of schools of armed and unarmed combat practiced in China for more than two thousand years. These schools range from the slow, graceful Taijiquan, or T'ai Chi Ch'uan, to the explosive Northern and Southern schools of Shaolin boxing." The goal of the wushujia, or wushu expert, is perfect form and concentration, expressing in movement a critical harmony of mind and body. One of China's traditional national art treasures (along with painting, calligraphy, medicine, and poetry), wushu combines powerful fighting movements and fluid Chinese choreography. It demands the strength and split-second accuracy necessary to wield a curved saber or heavy, long spear, plus subtle offensive and defensive gestures reminiscent of a praying mantis or snake.

Salzman began studying martial arts, sometimes called kung fu by Westerners, and became interested in Chinese calligraphy and ink painting, as a teenager in his native Connecticut. After graduating from Yale University in 1982 with a degree in Chinese Language and Literature, he spent two years teaching English at Hunan Medical College in the People's Republic of China. While there he was accepted as an apprentice--the first private student in twenty-five years--of Pan Qingfu, known as "Iron Fist," one of China's

2--wushu

foremost traditional boxers. He also studied with other martial arts masters, occasionally practicing his sword routines on rooftops or among 2,000-year-old Han dynasty burial mounds.

Iron & Silk provides views of China after the Cultural Revolution through vignettes of Salzman's encounters with Chinese men and women: students, fellow teachers, calligraphers, fishermen, government workers, and even ex-convicts. Reviewing the book for The New York Times, Richard Selzer wrote, "If there were a prize for most winning writer, Mark Salzman would cop it." Salzman shares some of these stories with his audiences at performances such as the one scheduled at the Museum, which are frequently sold out. Iron and Silk will be available in the Museum bookstore.

Salzman's wushu demonstration and storytelling appearance here is free. Museum members receive priority seating. The event is supported by the Thomas Munro Memorial Fund, established in honor of the Museum's former director of education.

#

For more information or photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.